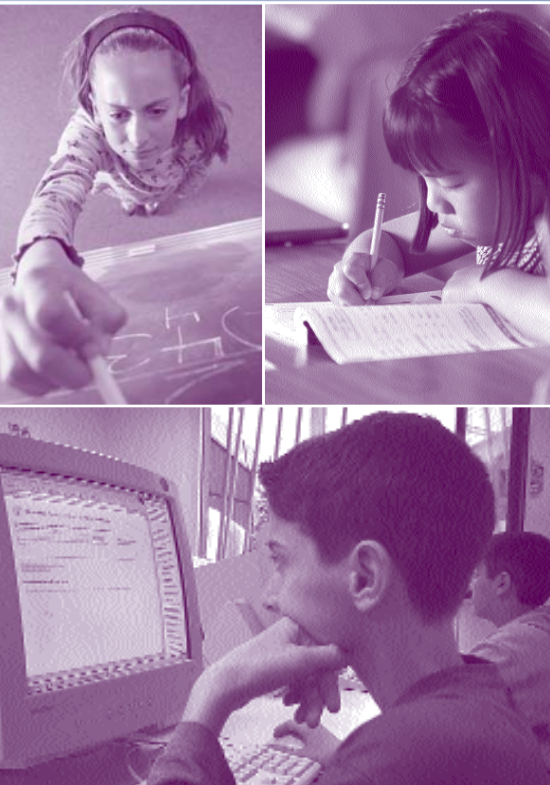


State Representative **Ben GiaQuinta**



Session Report



- ☒ The New State Budget
- ☒ Fighting Crime
- ☒ Economic Development Initiatives
- ☒ Legislation Impacting Students

INDIANA'S NEW BUDGET

School Funding Cuts and Increased Property Taxes



The new state budget that passed by a narrow margin increases property taxes and, at the same time, cuts funding for local schools. After years of bipartisan efforts to reform education and reduce property taxes, the majority party has approved a budget that will cut state funding for many schools and raise property taxes by nearly \$850 million.

I voted "NO" on the final version of the state budget because of the negative impact it will have on education, children and those who pay property taxes. I believe there will be many victims of the new state budget.

There are no minimum guarantees in state funding for schools, which means more than 140 school corporations will receive less money. Those corporations will be forced into eliminating teachers, cutting programs and increasing class sizes. Any additional funding for schools will come primarily from raising local property taxes.

There will be reduced state support through the Property Tax Replacement Credit (PTRC), another move that will increase local property taxes. This eliminates the promise of just three years ago to provide more state support to combat rising property taxes in light of the historic and controversial statewide reassessment.

"I believe there will be many victims of the new state budget."

In addition, funding for the program that provides health care for the elderly, disabled and children will increase by 5 percent, although bipartisan experts have predicted a 10-percent growth. State assistance for road repairs and improvements will decrease as well.

It is a shame that the legacy of this session will be a budget that turns its back on Indiana's schoolchildren and property taxpayers. For anyone who cares about education and local taxpayers, it is simply indefensible.



Fighting Crime

Senate Bill 164 will require a person convicted of possession of child pornography with a prior conviction for the same offense to register as a sex offender.

House Bill 1057 makes it a Class C infraction for a person in the passenger compartment of a motor vehicle to possess an alcoholic beverage container that has been opened, has a broken seal or from which some of the contents have been removed.

House Bill 1099 will make the offense of voyeurism a Class D felony instead of a Class B misdemeanor if a person is convicted of the offense a subsequent time.

Senate Bill 525 authorizes the state to seek a sentence of life imprisonment without parole for a person who commits a Class A felony constituting a sex offense against a child and who also has a prior unrelated Class A felony conviction for a sex offense against a child.



Education Issues Update

A number of important education bills were approved this session, but I think the most important measure affecting our children was the state budget. As I discuss in greater detail elsewhere in this newsletter, the new budget will shortchange many schools and force them to eliminate programs and lay off teachers, factors that will hurt our children's ability to get a quality education.

Here are other major education measures passed in 2005:

Starting in the 2010-11 school year, students will have to complete the

Starting in 2010, Indiana students will have to complete the Core 40



Core 40 curriculum in order to graduate. Core 40 requires students to receive credits in a series of advanced courses, including English and language arts, math, science, social studies and foreign languages.

Other education bills will change the enrollment date for kindergarten to August 1 from July 1, require schools to adopt rules to prohibit bullying, and provide daily opportunities for students to recite the Pledge of Allegiance and observe a moment of silence. The state Board of Education will be required to set up cheer-leading safety standards and guidelines.

Several proposals were defeated, including plans to move the ISTEP-plus test to the spring and revive the school voucher program.

Economic Development

I believe it is the duty of the General Assembly to provide the opportunities for Indiana to **create, maintain and increase good-paying jobs** in growth areas of our economy. This year's legislature made economic development a priority.

In fact, the very first bill passed into law this session created a new public-private group—the Indiana Economic Development Corporation—to serve as the leader for development efforts across our state. I was especially pleased we were able to make changes to this corporation that will ensure it is accountable to the public.

Other measures designed to help spur economic growth include **increasing the research and development tax credit**, phasing out the sales tax on research and development equipment, and extending the life and use of EDGE tax credits that help businesses retain and create jobs.

We also passed a measure that will speed the process of obtaining permits so developers can begin construction on new industrial sites. **Small business owners will receive additional tax breaks** under new legislation that will also reduce the potential that they will be harmed by government regulation.

All of these reforms can help economic growth in Indiana. We must remain attuned to the opportunities in a changing environment, and I will continue to search for ways to grow our economy and increase good-paying jobs.

Speed Limits

Hoosier drivers soon will be able to go faster on major roadways in Indiana.

Effective July 1, speed limits on rural sections of interstate highways will increase from 65 to 70 mph for cars and 60 to 65 mph for trucks. Speed limits on four-lane divided highways will increase from 55 to 60 mph following a study by the Indiana Department of Transportation to ensure the safety of higher speeds on those roads.



Protecting Firefighters

Volunteer firefighters and emergency medical technicians will not be penalized by their employers for being absent when they are responding to emergency calls.

Inspector General

Fraud and corruption in state government will be investigated by an inspector general created through a new state law approved in 2005. Thanks to changes championed by House Democrats, this inspector will work with locally-elected prosecutors and judges to look into charges of wrongdoing and determine whether to proceed with criminal charges.

Bad Weather

The Indiana Department of Health will be required to adopt new guidelines concerning the safety of children during bad weather.

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2005 Session Highlights



Reviewing legislation,
Representative GiaQuinta reads
at his desk in the House of
Representatives chamber.



Representative GiaQuinta
presses the voting machine
button at his desk to register
his vote on a bill.



Representative GiaQuinta
debates legislation on the
floor of the House of
Representatives.



Representatives Ben GiaQuinta
(left) and Vernon Smith (D-
Gary) listen to comments prior
to taking voting action.

Representative Ben GiaQuinta

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